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Super Bowl XLIV: New Orleans' Scott Fujita Continues To Lead A Disney Life

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By
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Just for the record, Scott Fujita is NOT Asian American. Or an Asian of any other kind, either.

Though he now stands at 6-5 and round about 250 and towers over them, Scott was adopted by the Fujita family when he was quite young. And unlike the now-famous story of Michael Oher, he certainly did not appear headed to the NFL, entering high school at 5-7, 120 pounds.

“I was kind of a late bloomer in high school and went straight up like a bean pole,” Fujita told me nine years ago when we met for the first time.

Indeed, Fujita finished high school standing at 6-4, 200 pounds. A two-sport star, he made 118 tackles,

four sacks and five interceptions that season...and won a slam dunk contest.

Despite this, he had nary a Division I offer. Turning his back on the Division III schools where he was highly recruited, Fujita chose to walk on at Cal. Though this was before the good years of Jeff Tedford, being a student-athlete at Cal-Berkeley is not easy. The school doesn't go easy on its athletes and expects them to earn their keep just like everyone else.

Not a problem for Fujita, who had more offers for academic scholarships than football ones.

He walked on for the Golden Bears, and impressed so much that he was offered a scholarship mid-way through his freshman season. He saw his first start as a sophomore and notched 11 tackles for the season while upping his weight to 230, much more attractive for a linebacker.

But trouble came by the way of stingers, a nerve injury which results in numbness in the arms and shoulders. It got so bad that he started to get them in his sleep. At 21, newly married, the Cal star linebacker opted for neck surgery, which could have ended his career.

I first met Fujita at Cal's media day in 2001, and he simply lit up the room. He stood for hours, answering every and all questions, laughing and smiling the entire time. Unlike many football players, Scott is highly personable and could well have been running for office instead of preparing for his senior season.

Though the team went 1-10 during his senior year, he finished his degree and was named Academic All-Pac 10 to boot. Drafted by the Kansas City Chiefs in the fifth round, once again he defied all the odds and spent three seasons with the Chiefs.

After a short stint in Dallas, Fujita turned up in New Orleans with the new Sean Payton regime. Though he has never been one for the sexy stats, he continues to work hard day-in and day-out, and has fashioned himself an eight year career in the NFL.

Always well-liked by his teammates, Fujita was introduced by Saints DB Mike McKenzie as the "Ninja Assassin". Considering himself culturally Japanese, Fujita has been known to cover his right fist with his left palm and bow, a gesture inspired by the yin-yang symbol.

Nine years ago, I wrote this article for Cal-Berkeley comparing Fujita's life to a Disney movie; Fujita himself is an acknowledged "big Disney guy."

I think it's safe to say that, with a Super Bowl ring on his finger, someone might well be making a movie about THIS football player pretty soon.



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